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CANADA-EAST ASIA:
BUSINESS CONNECTIONS
-Conference Policy Report-
February 1999

CONFERENCE POLICY REPORT

"Canada – East Asia: Business Connections"

Intent of the Conference

In October of 1998, Renison College and the University of Waterloo hosted their fourth annual East Asian Autumn Festival. The festival included a wide-range of cultural activities and was well attended by the Kitchener- Waterloo community.

The festival's official opening took place on September 30 at the Kitchener City Hall. Along with the "Tastes of East Asia Food Fair", the evening featured martial arts demonstrations, a presentation of Chinese and Korean dances, and a display of traditional Chinese costumes. Visitors also learned about origami and calligraphy techniques and sampled Chinese and Western folk music.

An information fair was held the next day in which participants learned about employment, study, and research opportunities in East Asia. Representatives from a variety of organizations and institutions were on hand to answer questions from the interested public. On the same day, several guest speakers took part in the celebrations. Dr. Jusuck Koh, principal architect for Oikos in Seoul, Korea gave the keynote address. He spoke about the connections between culture and architecture in a talk entitled, "Korean Culture Reflected in Architecture and Landscape." In a literary evening held at the University of Waterloo's Theatre of the Arts, audiences were treated to two unique perspectives of Canadian – East Asian relations. Dr. Peter Li discussed his work, "The Chinese in Canada" in which he explores the historical development of this group in this country. Author Kerry Sakomoto read from her best-selling novel "The Electrical Field". This work was nominated for the Giller Prize and the Governor General's Award for Fiction and explores the lingering effects of the Japanese-Canadian internment during the Second World War. The evening also showcased a special screening of the National Film Board's "Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Women in Early Canada", under the direction of Dora Nipp.

The Festival concluded on October 3, 1998 at Renison College with cultural demonstrations of origami, calligraphy, Aiki Ju-Jistsu and Karate techniques. Participants enjoyed samples of East Asian cuisine before concluding the festivities with demonstrations of the Chinese Lion Dance, and instructions in Acupuncture and Bonsai gardening.

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With the East-Asian Autumn Festival as a backdrop, the conference titled, "Canada – East Asia: Business Connections" was held on October 2, 1998. It was presented in conjunction with the KW Chamber of Commerce, Communitech, Canada's Technology Triangle Community Technology Association and the Centre on Foreign Policy and Federalism, University of Waterloo.

Its purpose was to bring together a diverse group of individuals to discuss Canadian interests and involvement in East Asia. The Conference examined the nature of relations between Canada and East Asia in a rapidly changing global economic community. In the fall of 1998, the Canadian government and Canadian businesses were trying to formulate responses to the economic crisis that was wreaking havoc in East Asia. The so called "Asian meltdown" served as a timely context to questions considered at the conference. Discussions focused on identifying business opportunities in Asia while considering questions of culture and human rights. The conference served as an important forum in which participants could share expertise and experience to further promote relations between Canada and East Asia.

Participants were offered a wealth of information regarding opportunities and challenges for businesses with respect to the changing economic realities in Asia. They were able to obtain up-to-date information from experts on market trends in East Asia, and speak directly with Team Canada members about what they had learned on their Asian Tour. The conference allowed key contacts to be made with other business people and concerned citizens who were interested in developing relationships with East Asia.

Panelists and presenters included academics, business representatives and senior government officials whose wide-ranging and varied expertise offered a rich base for discussion. The composition of the audience was as varied as that of the presenters. The seventy-five individuals in attendance included students, interested members of the Kitchener-Waterloo community, academics, business interests, and government officials. As a result, a variety of issues and concerns were raised, thereby contributing to the on-going dialogue on policy formation on Southeast Asia.

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Conference Participants

The Conference was designed such that participants attended three panel discussions and enjoyed a luncheon and keynote address by the Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Sergio Marchi, PC.

The first panel, "Economic Realities: Identifying Opportunities in Southeast and East Asia", was chaired by Dr. Valentine O'Donovan, CEO of Com Dev International. The panelists were Dr. Linda Lim (Director of the Southeast Asia Business Programme at the University of Michigan), Seiji Adachi (Director of Japanese Business Services at Pricewaterhouse Coopers), and John Yuen (Vice President of Sales at Trimark Mutual Funds). The presenters offered a macro geo-political view of Southeast Asia. Discussion focused on whether Canada could still find opportunities in East Asia and what strategies should be formulated for both the long and short term.

The second panel, "Doing Business With East Asia: What You Really Need to Know", was chaired by Dietmar Kubasta, Manager of Communications at Communitech. The panelists were Pamela Kanter (Area Director for Japan and Korea of the Ontario International Trade Corporation), Donald Tong (Director of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office), and Timo Vainionpaa (President of Aurora International Telecommunications Inc.). In this session, the focus was on practical issues that must be addressed by individuals wishing to do business successfully in East Asia. The speakers emphasized the role that government could play by providing resources and services. The need to be knowledgeable and culturally sensitive to each specific country was also highlighted. Ethical and human rights issues that should be considered were also noted.

Over lunch, guests heard a keynote address presented by the Minister for International Trade, the Honourable Sergio Marchi. Discussion included several issues related to conducting business in East Asia. Mr. Marchi gave a comprehensive review of Canadian economic and foreign policy interests in the region. He supplemented his prepared speech by commenting on broader cultural questions, including some of the human rights questions raised in the second session.

The third discussion, "Doing business in East Asia: Bringing the Deal to a Successful Conclusion" was chaired by Justian Fabian, Vice President of Business Development for Research in Motion. The Panelists were Peter Schturyn (Business Development Manager for

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Export Development Corporation), Antoinette M. Vita (Manager of Trade Finance at the Bank of Montreal) and Howie Wong (partner at Gowling, Strathy and Henderson). Lawyer Howie Wong underlined the need for Canadians to be well informed about the legal frameworks and assumptions of the countries in which they were doing business. In particular, Mr. Wong suggested that particular attention be paid to contract law, human rights, and intellectual property.

Concluding comments

"Canada – East Asia: Business Connections" was a conference that did more than simply address questions about trading relationships with East Asia. By drawing on a wide range of expertise, and a diverse audience, participants were able to consider the future of Canadian and Southeast Asian relations in a broad social and cultural context. In identifying the commonalities and differences shared by Canada and Southeast Asia, great gains were made towards building a sustained and rewarding base for long and short-term trading relationships. Providing businesses with the opportunity to share information and experience with one another was one of the more successful components of the conference.

The East Asian Autumn Festival and the conference on "Canada – East Asia Business Connections" built links with academics, students, interested citizens, and government in order to enhance the understanding of Southeast Asia's unique character. Both events attracted significant attention in the local press that described the events as, "far more interesting, more important and more enduring, than the ups and downs of stock markets and currency exchanges."

Based on the success of this festival and conference, future discussions of Canada – East Asia relations will continue to be most beneficial and rewarding.

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RENISON COLLEGE
University of Waterloo

Business Seminar Programme

9:00 a.m. – 10: 15 a.m. — **Economic Realities:**
Identifying Opportunities in South East Asia

Chair: **Dr. Valentine O'Donovan**, CEO, Com Dev International
Panelists:
Dr. Linda Lim, Director, Southeast Asia Business Programme, University of Michigan
Seiji Adachi, Director, Japanese Business Services, PricewaterhouseCoopers
John Yuen, Vice-President Sales, Trimark Mutual Funds

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. — Coffee Break

10:30 a.m. - Noon — **Doing Business With East Asia:**
What You Really Need to Know

Chair: **Dietmar Kubanta**, Manager of Communications, Communitech
Panelists:
Pamela Kanter, Area Director, Japan & Korea, Ontario International Trade Corporation
Donald Tong, Director, HongKong Economic & Trade Office
Timo Vainionpaa, President Aurora International Telecommunications Inc, Waterloo

Noon – 1:30 p.m. — **Luncheon & Keynote Address:**
Great Hall, Renison College
Sponsor: *Trimark Mutual Funds*
Keynote Speaker: **The Honourable Sergio Marchi**, Minister of International Trade

1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. — **Doing Business In East Asia:**
Bringing the Deal to a Successful Conclusion

Chair: **Justin Fabian**, Vice-President, Business Development, Research In Motion, Waterloo
Panelists:
Peter Schturyn, Business Development Manager, Export Development Corporation
Antoinette Vita, Manager, Trade Finance, Bank of Montreal
Howie Wong, Partner, Gowling, Strathy and Henderson

Celebrating our Pacific ties

ast Asian Festival kicks off Sept. 30 at Kitchener City Hall

eeing the posters going up for the 1998 East Asian Festival at Renison College made realize that a full year has now passed ce I started writing these weekly offerings. lot can happen in one short year. m thinking particularly about what has ıe to pass in Asia since I tried to convey my nusiasm for the 1997 East Asian Autumn tival in this column last September. ew people realized then that such momen- changes were just around the corner. But e had been warning signals.

ne collapse of the deal to produce a film se- for broadcast in Asia featuring the K-W phony, for instance, may have been an y symptom of the so-called "Asian flu." lis was a great loss.

opportunity like this, which would have ght world-wide attention to our premier ural institution, may not come again for some time.

rised that project failed

member being very surprised when first rd the news that this project had failed. ad thought that Japanese firms were in- ble.

d been told that the future was Asia, that conomies of Korea, Hong Kong, Singa- and China were setting the pace for the entury.

would all have to discipline ourselves — harder, tighten our belts, cut frills, and a hustle, hustle — or we'd be out of the

re has always been a threatening under- n this "competing in the world market- rhetoric, which has become a substi- r the language of the Cold War. s the same combative, fearful tone. It serves similar purposes: to sustain interests, to justify channelling re-

MARTIN DEGROOT

sources in chosen directions, and to make us feel insecure and ready to accept hardship and sacrifice.

The world looks different than it did a year ago.

But I still stand by what I said back then: That the global marketplace is not some kind of combat zone.

That it is important for Canadians to become aware that there's a world out there.

And that the cultural dimensions of an event like the Asian festival at Renison College represent things that are far more interesting, more important, and more enduring, than the ups and downs of stock markets and currency exchanges.

Dedicated organizers

Hopefully, the economic shifts of 1998 haven't dampened the enthusiasm, eroded the confidence or weakened the dedication of the people involved in putting on this event.

Because our ties to the peoples and cultures across the Pacific are as much a cause for celebration as they were a year ago.

With regard to trade connections, there may have been a faddish quality to the recent Pacific Rim fixation which is probably now on the wane.

But it is worth keeping in mind that doing business with Asia was the purpose for building the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the Panama Canada.

Remember also that this was the original obsession of Columbus himself, and that for at least two centuries after he first encountered this hemisphere, the North American continent remained a great geographic nuisance to the entrepreneurs and adventurers the West.

A fascination that has lasted half a millennium is not likely to disappear with a few glitches in the stock exchange.

Official opening set for Sept. 30

The official opening of the 1998 East Asian Festival will be held, once again, at Kitchener City Hall, on Wednesday, Sept. 30 from 7 to 9 p.m.

This is a free event that will feature an Asian food fair, martial arts, craft demonstrations, Chinese and Western folk music and Korean dance. Cultural offerings throughout the rest of the week will include a keynote address on Korean architecture, an exhibition of sculptures and drawings by Kitchener artist Nicholas Rees, and a literary evening followed by a special screening of Under the Willow Tree, a film about pioneer Chinese women in early Canada.

The celebrations will conclude with a full day of cultural demonstrations at Renison next Saturday. This is an event that is worthy of enthusiastic support from all the communities of the central Grand Valley region.

Need to know more?

For more information call 884-4404, ext. 657, or visit the Renison web-site: http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/inforen

Martin DeGroot teaches history at University of Waterloo. He comments on arts and culture Saturdays in the Record.

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